



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations.

Prospective applicants should consult the Humanities Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/challenge/humanitiesaccess-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Office of Challenge Grants staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions of the narrative, primarily in the budget category, may refer to 2016 guidelines that are no longer pertinent. Finally, some parts may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Prime Time Preschool Louisiana Expansion

Institution: Prime Time Family Reading

Project Director: Miranda Restovic

Grant Program: Humanities Access

NEH Humanities Access—PRIME TIME Preschool Louisiana Expansion

Effective humanities programs help to close the educational achievement gap often experienced by economically vulnerable children, and they work to ensure an engaged, educated, and thoughtful citizenry. Armed with evidence of success, PRIME TIME, Inc. respectfully requests the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to expand and sustain its PRIME TIME Preschool program via the Humanities Access grant. PRIME TIME, Inc. commits to raise \$100,000 between May 2016 and May 2018. Combined with the one to one match from the NEH, these funds will be invested in a term endowment with the Community Foundation of North Louisiana, with which the LEH currently invests funds. In total, \$200,000 will be devoted to supporting PRIME TIME Preschool programming throughout Louisiana from June 2018 to May 2021.

Origin

PRIME TIME Preschool is the innovative humanities-based program created by PRIME TIME Inc., a subsidiary of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH). PRIME TIME Inc. launched the PRIME TIME Preschool program in Louisiana in 2011, after 18 months of research, development and field piloting, to serve the most vulnerable constituents: impoverished 3-5 year old children and their families.

Description

PRIME TIME Preschool is based on award-winning, humanities-based teaching and learning strategies, and best practices outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). It introduces preschoolers and their families to fundamental humanities ideas through story-sharing and explorative play. By focusing on accessible and universal humanities themes such as justice, respect, patience, and courage contained in high-quality children's literature, the PRIME TIME Preschool program provides engaging learning experiences for vulnerable 3-5 year-olds; at the same time showing parents how to make personal connections to literature and support their child's school readiness at home. For six weekly 90-minute sessions families enjoy a complimentary nutritious meal, engage in reading, discussion, and exploration of the session's book. The program components consist of: A book walk (book previewing), Story and discussion time, literature exploration activities, Parent Guided Questionnaires (PGQ's), and the Group Language Experience Book (GLEB) to document and build ownership of the program. At the close of each session, families receive a copy of the book, thereby adding six titles to their home library over the course of the program. (See Supplementary Materials, Section A, Program Details and Sample Content)

Goals

1. Deliver high quality humanities-based literacy program for preschool aged children (3-5 yrs. old) and their parents/caregivers.
2. Increase school readiness of preschoolers.
3. Enhance parent/caretaker skills for facilitating school readiness.
4. Encourage a culture of literacy in the home.

Impact

Since its inception in 2011, **174 PRIME TIME Preschool programs** have been implemented in Louisiana, as well as an additional **12 programs with affiliate state partners in 2015**. In just 5 years, PRIME TIME Preschool has reached an estimated **3,480 individuals or 2,740 families in Louisiana** and **approximately 105 individuals and 45 families in Nebraska and Georgia**. Founded on research and best practices, PRIME TIME Preschool is a model program for enhancing school readiness, reading behaviors, and the social and cognitive skills necessary for educational success. The program has yielded positive impact and measurable results, as indicated in the 2014 outcomes study. (See Supplementary Materials, Section B 2014 Independent Outcomes Analysis).

Humanities Content

Humanities content distinguishes PRIME TIME Preschool as a unique early childhood learning program. Being conversant in the concepts that define humanity is a prerequisite to the ability to fully participate in and positively contribute to local and global communities (Oxfam, 2006). Gaining insight into and

exploring the humanities support the acquisition and maturation of critical thinking skills, which leverages individual and collective cognitive advancement (Stanford Humanities Center, 2015). This is particularly true for preschoolers, considering the rapid rate of brain development between birth and age five, which is faster than at any other period in the human lifespan (Kolb, 2009). The humanities may seem too lofty in subject matter to be understood among 3-5 year-olds. It is true that the humanities encompass ideas and themes of great depth and breadth. However, young children are engaged in the human experience along with their elders, and learn from observing those around them. Given the opportunity, they can and do express opinions and ideas about their world. PRIME TIME Preschool themes are tailored to the children's developmental stages, because to ignore or fail to encourage a child's attempts to communicate these would be a missed opportunity. Thematic terms are simplified, without losing the integrity of the ideas. Consider the topic of *justice*, for example. Young children typically may not fully comprehend the concept of being *just*. Change the word to *fairness*, a term that can be associated with justice, and young children will not only understand, but will find the topic compelling and relevant to their lives. According to UNICEF (United Nation's International Children's Fund) principles for producing communication to children, "communication for children should be positive and strengths-based, and is supported by guidelines to: build self-confidence as well as competence; use positive modeling; include children as active citizens, learning about and modeling social justice; and do no harm (principle)."¹ In PRIME TIME Preschool young children have their ideas heard by adults and their peers on topics that resonate with them. This personal encouragement through verbal expression leads to a motivation to communicate, think critically, and learn.²

PRIME TIME Preschool promotes participant-centered learning, open-ended questioning techniques, development of critical thinking skills, personal connections to literature, and collective learning strategies. These elements mirror the fundamentals of humanities programming. By considering ideas rather than facts alone, greater learning exploration for children and their parents/caregivers can begin to make better sense of the world around them. The humanities content in PRIME TIME Preschool is used to validate the child as an individual, and motivate them to continue to communicate and question, or in other words, to become well rounded critical thinkers.

Humanities themes and discussion permit parents/guardians and children to engage in a discussion that explores multiple facets of life in our homes, schools/workplaces, communities, country, and the larger world. This dialogue is meant to stimulate thinking beyond rote responses and promote active reflection on the humanities themes. The themes that comprise the humanities content of the "children's" literature selected for PRIME TIME are central to the daily realities of the human experience. Themes such as fairness, community, family, tradition, respect, individuality, destiny, and peace structure the discourse and are found within children's books that include content which participants can relate to their own lives and daily experiences. Such personal connections open the door for fruitful and educational conversations that sharpen text comprehension and critical thinking abilities.

In response to the National Endowment for the Humanities' *Common Good* initiative, and under the guidance of humanities scholars, PRIME TIME Inc. created ***Helping Hands: Supporting Each Other for the Common Good***, a syllabus designed to engage families in exploration of themes in literature, including Community, Individuality, Family, Teamwork, Friendship, and Leadership. The books and themes emphasize the relationships and supportive behaviors required for individual and collective advancement. This is ideal content for preschoolers who are learning about the expansive world beyond their home, and sowing the seeds for relationship-building and civic education. This series of books would be available to sites funded through this project.

Target Population—Youth, Communities of Color, and Economically Disadvantaged Populations

PRIME TIME Preschool serves economically and educationally vulnerable children (ages 3-5) as well as their parents/guardians). The proposed project will engage youth (children 3 to 5 years old) along with

¹ http://www.unicef.org/cwc/files/CwC_Web.pdf

² Cople, C., & Bredekamp, S., eds. (2009). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. NAEYC; Washington, DC, p. 120- 124

their families, communities of color (76% of all 2015 program participants were African American, Arab, Asian, Hispanic, and multi-ethnic), and economically disadvantaged populations (86% of implementing sites in 2015 reported that 50% to 100% of participating families were eligible for some form of government assistance). For 25 years, these same groups have been intensively engaged via the LEH's PRIME TIME Family Reading Time program, upon which PRIME TIME Preschool is based. PRIME TIME Family Reading Time is intended to engage youth ages 6 to 10 along with their entire families, which includes Throughout its Today, 35 million (16%) American adults (individuals ages 16 and older) are functionally illiterate, and therefore find it difficult to earn a living wage. Consequently, children from low-income families face enormous educational challenges. According to a report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, titled *The First Eight Years* (2013), the majority of children in the United States have not reached their appropriate level of cognitive development or acquired the appropriate foundational knowledge for academic success by age 8. Much of this lack of skills and core knowledge comes from a dearth of early experiential learning (Kolb, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2015) emphasizes the need for high quality early learning programming that equips children to be school-ready. As the United States ranks 25th in the world for preschoolers enrolled in early learning programs, the USDOE recognizes that millions of children, the majority of which are from low-income communities, do not have access to quality programming. PRIME TIME, Inc.'s response to this widespread need is a humanities-based approach, rooted in the conviction that quality literacy programming requires integrating the humanities, and that that approach can be imparted to families with preschool children, regardless of their educational background or access to resources. The program partners with eligible early childhood education centers and programs, (e.g. Head Start sites, preschools, libraries, and charter, public, and private schools) for implementation. Program participants include children and their parents who are likely to be low-level readers or are at-risk for functional illiteracy due to low socioeconomic status and limited access to quality education programs. Various studies have illuminated the link between low SES and low-level reading ability. Without intervention, the children of low literacy adults are likely to continue the cycle that low literacy creates. Research shows that the attitudes and behaviors of an individual are heavily influenced by those closest to them. In order to have a lasting impact on education, the PRIME TIME model emphasizes the importance of family participation. Through this inter-generational approach PRIME TIME Preschool enhances reading readiness in preschool-aged children while helping parents raise their levels of interest in reading as well as their abilities to provide academic support for their young children. Effective humanities programs help to close the educational achievement gap often experienced by economically vulnerable children, and they work to ensure an engaged, educated, and thoughtful democratic citizenry.

Sustainability

PRIME TIME Inc. believes in developing high-quality, outcomes-driven, replicable program models, whose affordability increases as infrastructure grows. Establishing appropriate and meaningful partnerships, providing the materials and training necessary for autonomous implementation, and providing technical and fundraising support; the LEH increases the potential for sustainability of PRIME TIME Preschool.

PRIME TIME's current support comes from a blend of public, private, and corporate sources at local, statewide, and national levels. A few of the most notable recent or current corporate/foundation donors include the internationally-based BHP Billiton Resources Company, the Shell Oil Company & Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Baptist Community Ministries, the Community Foundation of North Louisiana, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, Union Pacific Railroad, Capital One Bank, and the Pennington Foundation. With this diverse group of funders, PRIME TIME Inc. continues to build a case for early childhood humanities programming and leverage additional support for the project from public, private, national and regional entities.

While PRIME TIME works to seed programming across the nation, the affiliate network (self-funded PRIME TIME implementing partners throughout the nation) also serves to leverage program sustainability by fundraising in their specific regions. For example, Humanities Nebraska (which celebrated its 10th year of programming in 2012) leveraged their initial \$16,000 NEH grant into over \$600,000, thereby funding 85 programs and serving more than 4,200 participants. Program sustainability is also leveraged at the program site or community level. In 2015, 20% of sites were

completely self-supported via funds from state and federal programs. Affiliates and some self-funded Louisiana sites, support the continuation of PRIME TIME programming via fees paid for curriculum usage and team member training. Revenue from fees is pooled into a general fund that supports research, development, and competitive programming.

Fundraising Plan

If awarded, PRIME TIME, Inc. will raise \$100,000 in matching funds to support the development of a temporary endowment for PRIME TIME Preschool within 2 years. Fundraising Strategy:

1. Requesting support from existing corporate and philanthropic partners at the \$10,000 level:
 - (b) (4)
 - (b) (4)
2. Requesting support from existing community foundation partners at the \$5,000 level:
 - (b) (4)
3. (b) (4)
4. Applying funds from the previously mentioned general fund (funds generated from partner fees) to complete the match.

Funds raised would support the implementation of programs throughout Louisiana for three years. These funds will yield approximately 30 (ten per year) programs during that time period. 450 families or 1,350 individuals will be impacted as a result. With a total budget of \$200,000, less than \$150 per participant will be expended. See below for budget estimates.

V. Projected Uses of Annual Income (figures are per year)	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Salaries	\$17,100	\$17,100	\$17,100
Fringe Benefits	\$5,130	\$5,130	\$5,130
Program Coordinators	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Preschool Facilitators	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Books	\$8,250	\$8,250	\$8,250
Program Supplies Stipend	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total direct costs:	\$60,480	\$60,480	\$60,480
Total indirect costs:	\$6,048.00	\$6,048.00	\$6,048.00
Total annual expenses:	\$66,528	\$66,528	\$66,528

Evaluation

As is ongoing with all PRIME TIME programs, the success of the Preschool extension project will be assessed through monitoring, mentoring, data collection, and evaluation. Here is a summary of these:

MONITORING: All site program facilitators will receive intensive training by LEH staff and experienced professionals. Each site will be assigned a specific LEH staff person as program monitor. The monitor will serve as site support and quality control officer, with the following responsibilities: monitoring and reporting on recruitment and program planning, monitoring program implementation progress, observing and reporting on program delivery, and program closeout.

MENTORING: Each new site will also be assigned a professional mentor to support the preschool coordinator and team, who will also function as a program quality control monitor for LEH. The mentors will ensure that the programs are delivered in a developmentally appropriate way, confirm that all

components of the program are in place and occurring consistently, support the facilitators in their roles, and monitor and adjust the program as needed for optimal site-specific delivery.

DATA COLLECTION: Data collected and measured on facilitators, children, and parents.

Objective 1: Facilitators. Using a step-by-step checklist, facilitators will be trained on the tenets of the PRIME TIME program, until they achieve 80% accuracy. Throughout the implementation, facilitator performance will be probed to ensure fidelity of the PRIME TIME program.

Objective 2: Children. Prior to the implementation of the PRIME TIME program, baseline data on child performance will be collected on the school-readiness skills addressed within the program, including attention to read alouds, comprehension, and literacy skills. A measure of child attention will be used during read alouds, as attention is the foundation of learning (Bandura, 1989). Within the read alouds, children's responses to facilitator questions related to the story will also be measured. Following the read aloud, a sampling of child behavior in the preschool classroom will identify children's interaction with literacy materials (reading, writing, interacting with letters, book making, etc.). Following implementation of the PRIME TIME program, data collection will resume as described above.

Objective 3: Parents. As one objective of the PRIME TIME program is to increase literacy in the home, baseline data will be collected on children's literacy behaviors prior to the start of the program. Parents will be asked to complete a reading log of their child's literacy behaviors over the course of one week. Following implementation of the PRIME TIME program, parents/caretakers will be asked again to complete a reading log of their child's literacy behaviors. Additionally, a pre- and post- measure of recommended practices in reading to young children will measure increases in parent/caretaker understanding of reading to young children, before and after observing multiple PRIME TIME facilitators model recommended practices in literacy instruction for parents/caretakers.

Social validation. Data will be collected in the form of an exit interview with facilitators, children, and parents/caregivers on the PRIME TIME program, as an additional measure of program evaluation. All data will be used on a yearly basis to make modifications to the implementation of the program.

EVALUATION: The above-mentioned data collection plan was designed by an external evaluator to measure the effects of the PRIME TIME program in light of the stated program objectives. This data will be used to monitor the fidelity of implementation by the facilitators, the impact on child behaviors within the preschool classroom, the impact of child behaviors in the home, and parent knowledge of recommended practice in literacy instruction. Social validation data from all groups will assist LEH on the implementation of the program. Site recruitment and attendance records will inform regarding whether the program was able to attract and retain the targeted population (which is also a measure of program quality at the site-specific level). This data will indicate whether outcomes have been met. All reports and data will be reviewed through third-party evaluation for process quality, outcomes documentation, etc.

INDICATORS: These benchmarks will be considered indicators of program success: **(1) program quality:** meet or exceed enrollment of 12 families per site; and meet or exceed average participant retention rate of 76%; **(2) facilitator outcomes:** train facilitators to 80% reliability on PRIME TIME criteria and maintain during implementation; **(3) child outcomes:** increased attention to read alouds, increased comprehension of read alouds, and increased interaction with literacy materials; and **(4) family outcomes:** increased child literacy interaction at home, increased understanding of recommended practices in reading instruction.